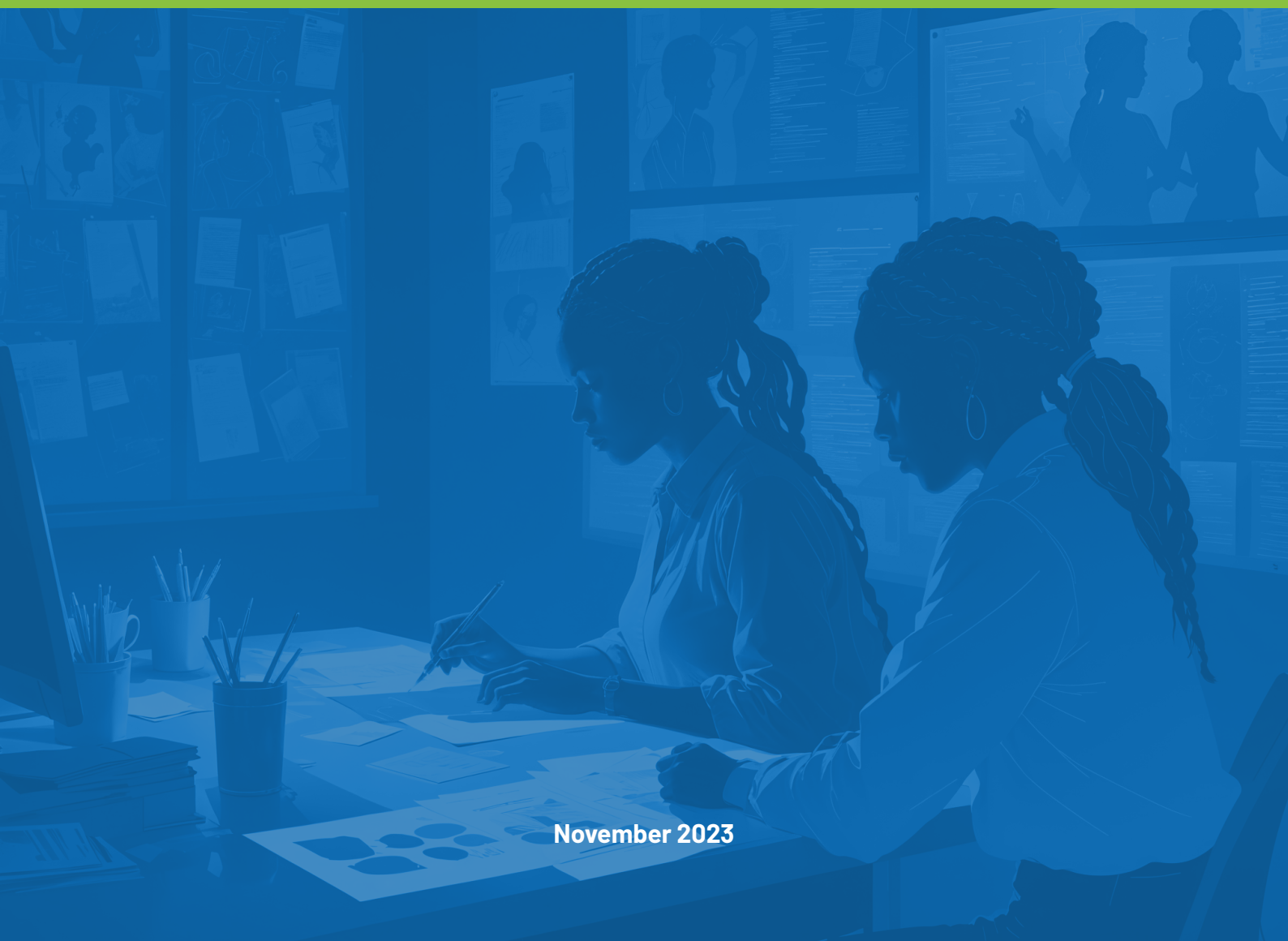




NATIONAL
COALITION OF
HUMAN
RIGHTS
DEFENDERS
UGANDA

Code of Conduct



November 2023

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGA	Annual General Assembly
ED	Executive Director
HR	Human Resource
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
NAC	National Appeals Committee
NCHRD-U	National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda
NDC	National Disciplinary Committee
SRCD	Sub Regional Coordinator
RFPs	Regional Focal Persons
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRDC	Sub Regional Disciplinary Committee
TTWGs	Technical Thematic Working Groups

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) is a registered organization of various organizations and individual Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) that was formed in June 2013. NCHRD-U seeks to strengthen the work of HRDs throughout the country through synergy and collaboration at the national and international level to enhance the protection mechanisms for HRDs and their capacity to effectively defend human rights. NCHRD-U focuses its work in all regions of Uganda. The Coalition Secretariat has partnerships with various organizations as well as individual members that support the work of human rights defenders in Uganda. NCHRD-U's purpose is to protect and promote the work of HRDs in a safe and secure environment through linkages with national, regional, and international entities.



2. BACKGROUND TO CODE OF CONDUCT

NCHRD-U works in a dynamic and delicate environment of human rights defense that often entails challenging established policies, processes, practices, systems, and structures that promote human rights violations. As an organization working with a wide mix of members and committed to the promotion and protection of human rights in Uganda, NCHRD-U recognizes the importance of having a code of conduct. This code of conduct provides guidance on the conduct and behavior of members as well as ensures that all staff of the Coalition Secretariat, members, HRDs, and stakeholders are treated with respect and dignity.

The need for a code of conduct is driven by the necessity to establish effective governance, management, and operational systems that align members' collective efforts towards common goals. NCHRD-U prioritizes creating a safe and inclusive environment that promotes the rights and well-being of all its members. The principles outlined in the code of conduct ensure that expectations of personal conduct are clearly specified and provide a framework for addressing any violations of the code.

One of the significant benefits of the code of conduct is that it clarifies the minimum expectations, standards, roles, and responsibilities of NCHRD-U's members, regional structures, the secretariat, board, and AGM. The code of conduct outlines the expected behaviors, breaches, procedures for addressing grievances and disciplinary actions. This ensures that all members of the Coalition understand their rights and responsibilities and can resolve conflicts transparently and equitably.

The development of the code of conduct began with a needs assessment. The assessment was designed and conducted collaboratively, identifying best practices, needs, and gaps that would inform the code's development. The needs assessment also explored existing practices, scenarios, and behavioral conduct within the Coalition, and involved discussions with board members, the technical thematic working group, regional head representatives, and staff at the secretariat.

The adoption of this code of conduct enhances the effectiveness and credibility of NCHRD-U as an organization committed to promoting and protecting human rights in Uganda. It supports a culture of accountability and respect for all members of the Coalition, ensuring that everyone is working towards the same goals under a common set of principles.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to harmonize and outline the standards of behavior and expectations that apply to all NCHRD-U staff¹, volunteers, and members including how they relate with each other as well as with HRDs, volunteers, beneficiaries, partners, and stakeholders.

4. OBJECTIVES

1. **To promote ethical behavior:** The code of conduct aims to promote ethical behavior among NCHRD-U staff, members as well as inspire the conduct of non-member HRDs. It spells out the standards of behavior that are expected.
2. **To provide guidelines for decision-making:** The code of conduct provides guidelines for decision-making in ethical dilemmas. It helps staff and members to make the right decisions in difficult situations.

¹ The NCHRD-U Human Resource Policy 2022 (Section 1.5.3), provides a specific code of conduct for staff

3. **To promote transparency and accountability:** The code of conduct promotes transparency and accountability. It spells out the procedures for reporting unethical behavior and the consequences of violating the code.
4. **To protect the reputation of the organization and HRDs:** The code of conduct helps to protect the reputation of the organization. It ensures that staff and members behave in a way that is consistent with the values and mission of the organization.
5. **To promote professionalism:** The code of conduct promotes professionalism. It ensures that staff and members behave in a professional manner at all times.
6. **To provide a uniform disciplinary code of practice:** The code of conduct helps to ensure that all staff and members are treated in a fair and consistent manner in circumstances where disciplinary action is required.

5. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

5.1. Staff and members covered

The Code of Conduct applies to the secretariat staff and members to ensure exemplary behavior and respectful environments for all.

5.2. Platforms, Events, and Activities

The principles and expectations outlined in the Code of Conduct are applicable across all spaces where activities are implemented by NCHRD-U, its members, or where NCHRD-U is represented by staff or a member. This includes physical events, online platforms, social media, workshops, meetings, and any other engagement. The Code of Conduct is also in effect within physical spaces where NCHRD-U activities occur, such as office premises, training venues, community centers, and member organization locations. It extends to both formal and informal interactions within these contexts.

5.3. Stages of Engagement

The principles of the Code of Conduct apply from the moment an individual or organization joins the NCHRD-U as a staff or member and continue throughout their involvement, ensuring a consistent and respectful experience.

6. VALUES THAT INFORM THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct is built upon five values that shape the interactions, decisions, and behaviors of every staff and member. These reflect our core values.

6.1. Respect

Treat every individual with respect, recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of each person, and embrace diverse perspectives and listen actively to foster an environment where differing opinions are valued.

Celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity by creating a space where everyone is welcome and appreciated for their unique backgrounds, experiences, and contributions.

Practice empathy and understanding, seeking to comprehend and support the needs, challenges, and aspirations of fellow staff, members and HRDs.

6.2. Professionalism

Maintain the highest standards of professionalism in interactions, communication, and conduct as well as approach our work with dedication, competence, and a commitment to excellence.

Uphold the principles of honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior in all actions to earn and maintain the trust of all stakeholders.

Take responsibility for actions, decisions, and their outcomes. Be accountable for safeguarding the values of NCHRD-U and fulfilling our commitments.

6.3. Cooperation

Value collaboration and teamwork, recognizing that collective efforts yield greater impact, and strive to work together harmoniously, leveraging each other's strengths to achieve our goals. Actively contribute to the betterment of the organization, striving to make a positive impact through actions, initiatives, and interactions.

6.4. Confidentiality

Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information shared within the organization, honoring the privacy of individuals and safeguarding their personal data.

6.5. Adherence to Laws and Regulations

Compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and policies that govern our organization's operations, ensuring that actions are conducted within legal and ethical boundaries. Staff and members should at all times adhere to national and international human rights standards.

7. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1. NCHRD-U members

The rights of NCHRD-U members include the freedom to express their opinions, participate in decision-making, and access information relating to the organization and code of conduct. Members also have the right to a safe and secure working environment, free of discrimination, harassment, and intimidation.

The responsibilities of NCHRD-U members include adherence to the code of conduct, respecting the rights and dignity of fellow members, and working towards the goals and objectives of the organization. Members are also responsible for maintaining transparency, accountability, and professionalism in their work.

7.2. Secretariat

The Secretariat is responsible for ensuring that all staff are thoroughly familiar with the Code of Conduct

and are complying with it. The secretariat is also responsible for ensuring access to the Code of Conduct for all members and compliance with it by all members.

8. EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

It's the requirement of NCHRD-U staff and members to always conduct themselves respectfully and responsibly in such a way as to enhance the reputation of the organization. These standards of conduct are intended to underpin and clarify standards required by NCHRD-U of its staff and members. By adhering to these expected behaviors, staff and members ensure that interactions, collaborations, and communications align with NCHRD-U's vision.

8.1. Respectful Communication

- i. Communicate with kindness, empathy, and patience.
- ii. Listen actively and attentively to others' viewpoints.
- iii. Refrain from using disrespectful language, derogatory comments, or personal attacks.
- iv. Do not use sexually laced tones.

8.2. Collaboration and Cooperation

- i. Work collaboratively and contribute positively to team efforts.
- ii. Share ideas openly and encourage constructive feedback.
- iii. Respectfully address conflicts and differences through dialogue and mediation.
- iv. Show up at events and engagements where needed.

8.3. Inclusive Participation

- i. Embrace diversity and ensure that everyone's voice is heard.
- ii. Create an inclusive atmosphere where individuals from all backgrounds feel valued and respected.

8.4. Professionalism and Integrity

- i. Uphold the highest standards of professionalism in all interactions.
- ii. Act with honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct.
- iii. Ensure that personal interests do not compromise the best interests of the organization.
- iv. Adopt an appropriate dress code befitting of one's context and work space.

8.5. Confidentiality and Privacy

- i. Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information shared within the organization.
- ii. Safeguard personal and organizational sensitive data obtained in the line of work and refrain from sharing it without proper authorization.

8.6. Positive Contribution

- i. Contribute constructively to discussions, initiatives, and projects.

- ii. Offer suggestions for improvement in a respectful manner while considering the recipient's feelings.
- iii. Seek opportunities to make a meaningful impact and support the mission of NCHRD-U.
- iv. Be fully represented in spaces and events where required.

8.7. Accountability and Ownership

- i. Take responsibility for your actions, commitments, tasks, and their outcomes.
- ii. Admit mistakes and work toward solutions when challenges arise.

8.8. Adherence to Policies and Regulations

- i. Follow all organizational policies, procedures, and regulations.
- ii. Adhere to laws governing our work and operations.

9. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

NCHRD-U is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for staff, members, and HRDs, and those it interacts with. To ensure the highest standards of behavior, the following actions are considered unacceptable and are strictly prohibited. All staff and members are expected to refrain from engaging in any of the following behaviors:

9.1. Harassment

Engaging in any form of harassment, including but not limited to verbal, physical, or online harassment that targets individuals based on their race, gender, religion, or any other protected characteristic. Any unwanted conduct that occurs with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Commit any act or any behavior, deliberate or otherwise, that makes the recipient feel persecuted or vulnerable.

9.1.1 Sexual Harassment

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

Guidelines and Procedures on Sexual Harassment

In order to provide a productive and pleasant working environment and in accordance with the NCHRD-U's protection mandates and core values, it is important that the institution maintains a work place and working environment characterized by mutual respect. Accordingly sexual harassment shall not be tolerated.

The victim or the offender may be of any gender. The victim or offender maybe a NCHRD-U member, a board member, TTWG member or secretariat staff. A member of NCHRD-U shall be deemed to have been sexually harassed if a NCHRD-U member, a board member, TTWG member or secretariat staff;

- i. directly or indirectly makes a request to that NCHRD-U member for sexual intercourse, sexual contact

or any other form of sexual activity that contains:

- ii. an implied or express promise for preferential treatment in NCHRD-U's interventions or activities.
- iii. an implied or express threat of detrimental treatment in the working environment.
- iv. use of language whether written or spoken of sexual nature
- v. use of visual material of sexual nature; or
- vi. shows physical behavior of a sexual nature which directly or indirectly subjects the member or secretariat staff to behavior that is unwelcome or offensive to that member and that, either by its nature or through repetition has a detrimental effect to that member's working environment.

If a member is harassed in any way described above, a member may lodge a complaint in that procedure contained in the code of conduct in section 10

9.2. Discriminatory Remarks or Jokes

Making jokes, remarks, or comments that perpetuate stereotypes, discriminate against, or marginalize individuals or groups.

9.3. Bullying and Intimidation

Participating in bullying, cyberbullying, or any form of intimidation that causes fear, discomfort, or distress to others.

9.4. Hate Speech and Offensive Language

Using hate speech, derogatory language, insults, or offensive remarks that target individuals or groups based on their identity or background, including use of abusive/rude language to anybody while undertaking HRD work

9.5. Disruptive Behaviour

Engaging in behaviors that disrupt the functioning of the organization, its activities, or events, thereby negatively affecting the experiences of other staff, members or HRDs. Undermining events or engagements by like-minded entities, whatever the differences that may exist.

9.6. Retaliation

Taking retaliatory actions against individuals who report violations of the Code of Conduct or express concerns about unacceptable behavior.

9.7. Invasion of Privacy

Intruding into the private affairs or personal information of others without their explicit consent.

9.8. Unauthorized Sharing of Information

Sharing sensitive or confidential information about NCHRD-U, its staff, members and HRDs, or its stakeholders without proper authorization.

9.9. Unprofessional Conduct

Engaging in unprofessional behavior that reflects negatively on oneself, other staff, members, HRDs, or the organization, including dishonesty, misrepresentation, or manipulation.

9.10. Disrespectful Communication

Using disrespectful, offensive, or aggressive language in interactions, communications, or discussions.

9.11. Misuse of Resources

Misusing or misappropriating the resources, funds, or assets entrusted to you for personal gain or purposes unrelated to the organization's mission.

9.12. Violation of Laws or Regulations

Engaging in behavior that violates local, national, or international laws, regulations, or policies.

9.13. Endangering Safety

Behaving in a manner that jeopardizes the physical, emotional, or psychological safety of others.

9.14. Non-Compliance with Policies

Failing to adhere to NCHRD-U's policies, procedures, and guidelines.

9.15. Violence and Use of Weapons

Violence or threats of violence in, or related to, the workplace or with other stakeholders.

9.16. Misuse of Position

The use of your position or authority as staff or member as a way of fulfilling personal interests or for purposes other than those rightly acceptable by the organization and without prior authorization.

9.17. Misappropriation of Assets

Using your position to steal from the organization. For example, theft of cash, services, inventory, time, or intellectual property, personal use of company vehicles or machines.

9.18. Corruption and Bribery

Subverting the decision-making process for personal or member organization gain. For example, providing funds to obtain benefit to another business or individual in exchange for business advantage or personal gain.

9.19. Promoting fake news/misinformation and disinformation:

Sharing information without verifying its authenticity. Trusting one source of information without checking for alternative perspectives. Spreading fake news/misinformation, or disinformation.

9.20. Participating in partisan activities

Being involved in partisan activities while carrying out HRD work without separating politics from it. Ignoring the HRD code of ethics and acting based on personal political beliefs. Engaging in political activities while carrying out HRD work. Taking sides and showing bias towards certain political views when dealing with HRD matters. Letting personal beliefs overshadow HRD work. Express political opinions or beliefs in the workplace.

9.21. Promoting sectarian tendencies

Engaging in HRD activities that discriminate based on religion, discouraging diversity, and disrespect for different beliefs and cultures. Provoking conflicts or tensions due to sectarian differences. Neglecting how your actions could be perceived by others and creating a sense of exclusion or bias.

9.22. Promoting Criminal Activity

Any involvement in criminal activity, including organized crime such as trafficking in people and illegal trade in black market goods, as well as engaging in activities that are criminalized under national law, unless such activities contradict international human rights standards or other democratic norms.

9.23. Consumption of Alcohol

Consumption of alcohol during work hours in exceptional cases, such as official dinners or events where its use is expected. Consumption should not affect work or harm the organization's reputation. Consumption of alcohol while driving is strictly prohibited.

9.24. Pornography

The use or presence of pornographic material in the workplace. This includes use of any organization-owned equipment or materials to access or distribute pornographic content. Dealing with child pornography is strictly prohibited.

9.25. Narcotic Substances

Any involvement or contact with narcotics, unless authorized by a medical practitioner. All forms of narcotics are unacceptable unless medically prescribed.

10. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES AND MEASURES

10.1. Disciplinary Procedures

10.1.1. Reporting

If you witness or experience any violation of the Code of Conduct, report as soon as possible (confidentially or in writing). Ensure that as much information as possible is provided to aid in the investigation.

Where a staff member prefers to report anonymously, steps to be taken under the NCHRD-U whistleblower policy will be followed.

A member can report a violation of the code of conduct by reaching out to their immediate supervisor.

If a member is not able to reach or is uncomfortable with their supervisor, then they should reach out to the SRCD.

If the member is not able to reach or is uncomfortable with their SRCD, then they should reach out to the Executive Director.

In case the complaint is against or concerns the Executive Director, the matter shall be reported to the Chairperson of the Executive Board.

10.1.2. Investigation

NCHRD-U's commitment to maintaining a safe and respectful environment means that all concerns will be thoroughly investigated and addressed. Every staff and member should feel confident that their voice is heard, and that appropriate actions will be taken to ensure accountability and uphold NCHRD-U standards. For all cases where the code of conduct will be violated, investigation and enforcement will be approached as follows:

10.1.2.1. Thorough Investigation

On receiving a report, the SRCD at the subregional level or the Executive Director at the national level, will initiate (within 72 hours) a comprehensive and impartial investigation to determine the accuracy and nature of the reported violation. The investigation shall be concluded within 10 working days.

10.1.2.2. Confidentiality

The confidentiality of all parties involved will be maintained throughout the investigation to the extent permitted by law and organizational policies.

10.1.2.3. Fairness and Impartiality

The investigation process will be conducted fairly and impartially, allowing all parties to provide their account of the incident.

10.1.2.4. Consideration of Evidence

All available evidence, including witness statements and relevant documentation, will be carefully considered during the investigation.

10.1.2.5. Resolution

Based on the findings of the investigation, appropriate actions will be taken to address the violation and prevent its recurrence.

10.1.3. False Claims

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious breach of the code of conduct and disciplinary procedures evoked against the individual.

10.1.4. Retaliation Prohibition

NCHRD-U strictly prohibits any form of retaliation against individuals who report violations or participate in investigations.

10.2. Disciplinary Hearing

Disciplinary hearing procedure for staff of the NCHRD-U shall follow provisions outlined in the NCHRD-U Human Resource Manual.

In cases where, on the face of it, a member has committed an offense of gross misconduct, a disciplinary hearing must be convened.

No decision regarding disciplinary action will be taken without first providing the member with the opportunity of defending himself/herself unless the organization cannot reasonably be expected to provide this opportunity.

For record purposes, the disciplinary hearing proceedings must be documented and signed off by all parties involved.

10.2.1. Disciplinary Committee (DC) hearing

The authority to initiate disciplinary hearings is vested in SRCD at the subregional level, the Executive Director at the national level or the Board Chairperson at the national appeal level.

10.2.2. Disciplinary Committee hearings

10.2.2.1. Stage 1 - Before the hearing

The member must be notified in writing of the pending disciplinary committee hearing by issuing him/her a notification for disciplinary hearing letter. The following requirements must be met:

- The notification must be given at least 48 hours before the actual hearing.
- The charge against the person must be specified.
- The person must be informed that he or she has the right to be represented by a person of their choice, e.g. lawyer.

10.2.2.2. Stage 2 – The Plea and Determination of Guilt

Before a decision concerning guilt is taken, the charge must be put to the member, and he/she must be given the opportunity of pleading guilty or not guilty.

If he/she pleads guilty, questions must be asked to determine whether he/she understands the charge. If it is clear that he/she understands the charge, the member can be found guilty and the presiding chairperson can proceed to Stage 3.

If the person pleads not guilty, evidence must be presented and the following procedure adopted:

- i. All the witnesses in support of the case must give evidence.
- ii. Upon completion of evidence of each witness, the member and his/her representative must be given the opportunity to cross-examine the witness(es).
- iii. When all the witnesses have been led, the member must be given the opportunity to lead his evidence – in person – and call witnesses, who may be questioned by the presiding chairperson.
- iv. A decision concerning guilt must then be made. Before making the decision, an adjournment should be requested by the presiding chairperson in order to consider all the information gained.
- v. If the person is guilty, proceed to Stage 3. If the person is not guilty, the member is excused, and the incident may not be taken into further consideration.

10.2.2.3. Stage 3 – Penalty Consideration

A decision concerning sanction by the presiding chairperson is made at this stage after consultation with the secretariat and approval by the Executive Director or Board chair.

Where the presiding chairperson is at the SRDC, a recommendation on decision concerning sanction shall be made to the Executive Director or designate at the secretariat.

The Executive Director shall, in consultation with the secretariat write and sign the recommended sanction.

The Executive Director shall, in consultation with the secretariat engage the SRCD to ascertain any questions or concerns that may arise around the facts, process, or recommendations.

Mitigating factors must be taken into account, including length of service or membership, work performance, behavior history, and discipline record.

Based on all the evidence and the code of conduct, a decision regarding sanction is then made.

10.2.2.4. Stage 4 – Notification of penalty

The NCHRD-U member should be given his/her sanction in writing by the presiding officer within 48 hours after the disciplinary hearing.

The sanction shall be signed by the Executive Director or Board Chair.

10.3. Appeal

Members who are subject to enforcement actions have the right to appeal.

A member must be informed of his/her right to appeal the sanction to the presiding chairperson within a period of seven (7) working days.

In the case of an appeal, the sanction should be deferred until the appeal has been addressed and a final decision taken.

In case the final decision is the same following the appeal, then the sanction will be reapplied.

10.3.1. Appeals process

For appeals from the Board Chair shall constitute the NAC as required or when notified by the Executive Director or NDC presiding chairperson of an upcoming appeal.

The Executive Director or Designate shall constitute the NDC when notified by the SRDC of an upcoming appeal.

The NDC shall be the first appeals level for cases from the SRDC. Thereafter, if or when another appeal is sought on the same case having arose from the SRDC to the NDC, the appeal will be addressed by the NAC as the final appeals level.

Appeals will follow disciplinary procedures provided by this code of conduct.

10.4. Disciplinary Measures

Consequences for breaching the Code of Conduct may differ. Depending on the findings of the investigation, appropriate actions will be taken to address the violation and prevent future occurrences.

10.4.1. Counselling

Counselling is a process in which a trained professional helps an individual to explore psychological, emotional, or social issues and work towards resolving them. It involves open communication in a safe and supportive environment with the aim of improving mental health, well-being, and overall quality of life. Counselling is an attempt to correct a situation and prevent it from getting worse without having to use the disciplinary procedure. Where improvement is required, the person must be given clear guidelines as to:

- Expectations in terms of improving shortcomings in conduct or behaviour
- The timelines for improvement.
- When a review of their conduct or behavior will be conducted.
- The staff or member must also be told, where appropriate, that failure to improve may result in

formal disciplinary action.

10.4.2. Verbal Warning

Verbal warnings may be issued for minor disciplinary infringements. It is recommended that such a warning should be documented for secretariat record purposes.

10.4.3. Written Warning

Written warnings should be recorded in duplicate and should state the date on which the offense took place, the date on which the warning was issued, the reasons for the warning, and any corrective action that may be required to correct or change behavior. Where a warning is issued, the staff or member should be advised that failure on his/her part to correct, improve or change behavior, will result in further and possibly more severe disciplinary action being taken.

The member will be required to sign the warning, not as an admission of guilt, but to indicate that he/she has received it. Should the staff or member refuse to sign the warning, this should be noted by having a witness sign the letter, verifying the fact that the employee refused to sign.

The warning should also be signed by the Executive Director or Board Chair. The original copy of the warning must be filed at the secretariat. Each written warning will be cancelled after the expiry of the period of 6 (six) months, provided that no similar offenses are committed during that period.

10.4.4. Final Written Warning

When a member has accumulated a number of warnings in terms of the code of conduct or where the nature of the offense warrants it, a final written warning may be issued.

A procedure notifying the member of the charge, allowing the member internal representation, proving the charge, allowing a defense, a decision regarding guilt, and the determination of the appropriate sanction must be followed.

When issuing a final warning, it should also be clear to the member that a final written warning is viewed seriously and that any further breach of code of conduct in the next six (6) months could result in discharge from the coalition.

Each final written warning will be cancelled after the expiry of a period of one year (12 months).

10.4.5. Suspension

A secretariat staff or member may be suspended from engaging in activities of the coalition for a specified period not exceeding four weeks pending investigations in respect to an alleged offense. The suspension allows for thorough investigations without the person interfering with the evidence. In case the person is not guilty after the investigation and disciplinary hearing, the suspension should be cancelled.

10.4.6. Termination

Subject to conducting a disciplinary hearing, a staff member of the coalition may be terminated from employment if found guilty of any form of gross misconduct as outlined in the HR policy or the code of

conduct.

Subject to conducting a disciplinary hearing and on recommendation of the board, membership in the coalition may be terminated by the board if a member is found guilty of any form of gross misconduct as outlined in the code of conduct.

11. COMMUNICATION ON REPORTS OF VIOLATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

For matters internal to NCHRD-U, the presiding officer for the DC, as mandated by the Committee TORs and in consultation with the Executive Director, shall communicate outcomes and matters pertaining to processes of disciplinary action taken against affected coalition members or staff.

For matters external to the Coalition but involving a secretariat staff or coalition members, the Executive Director or the Board Chairperson or designate, appointed by the AGM, shall have the authority to speak on behalf of the Coalition in matters relating to the code of conduct, including outcomes and matters pertaining to processes of disciplinary action taken against affected coalition members or staff members.

12. OFFENSES

12.1. Minor Offenses

These are usually first-time offenses with low impact on individuals or the organization or its operations. Including late coming to work related initiatives (first time), unexplained absence from tasks or work assignments during the course of duty, and failure to apply oneself properly to his/her duties. Minor offenses do not require disciplinary hearing but can be handled appropriately within the respective disciplinary structures established.

Staff or members who are found guilty of minor offenses should be counseled or given verbal warning. However, they should be informed that repetition of such acts or any other act of indiscipline will lead to more serious disciplinary action.

12.2. Serious Misconduct

Such offenses involve negligence of duty, poor performance, and failure by staff or members to obey reasonable guidance resulting in delay in service delivery, poor client/partner service, damage to organization property, etc. For example, failure to observe security and safety regulations, smoking in a "No Smoking" area, insubordination, disrespect, impudence, or insolence, use of NCHRD-U equipment without authority, negligence or malicious damage to equipment or material, causing injury to others out of negligence, intimidation or incitement to violence, salacious dressing, comments or remarks towards colleagues, members, or stakeholders, among others.

The above offenses are serious in nature and, in some cases, will require a disciplinary hearing to ascertain the appropriate penalty. The reprimand applicable to staff and members who have committed such offenses includes first, second, and final written warning letters based on the gravity of the offense and frequency of occurrence. It should be noted that persistence in committing serious offenses will result in dismissal from employment or membership in NCHRD-U.

12.3. Gross Misconduct

Acts of gross misconduct are against the interest of the organization or usually intentional and done for the individual's selfish gain, resulting in loss/damage to NCHRD-U property or image, loss of client/partner/stakeholder trust, cause injury to others, or result in an unsafe working environment. For example, unauthorised disclosure of confidential organization information, deliberately supplying incorrect or falsified information, fraud or intention to defraud the organization, theft of organization property, unlawful possession of organization property, physical assault to or wilful endangering of the safety of a staff, member, HRD, or member of the public, possession of dangerous weapons while on NCHRD-U premises without permission, as well as any other reason recognized in law as being sufficient grounds for instant dismissal.

Acts of gross misconduct shall warrant a disciplinary hearing, and in case a staff or member is found guilty of the offense, then he/she should be dismissed from NCHRD-U.

13. DISCIPLINARY STRUCTURES AND THEIR ROLES

13.1. National Appeals Committee (NAC)

The Board Chair shall constitute a National Appeals Committee as required or when notified by the Executive Director or designate of an upcoming appeal.

The National Appeals Committee shall consist of three (3) persons: a Board representative, the Executive Director or designated person from the secretariat, and a representative from Regional Heads.

The NAC shall handle disciplinary cases referred to it by the NCHRD-U Disciplinary Committee (NDC).

The NAC shall be chaired by either the Board representative or Executive Director (or designate), with the Regional Head as Secretary.

13.2. National Disciplinary Committee (NDC)

The NDC shall be instituted whenever a disciplinary hearing must be convened. That is, when there is gross misconduct of a member.

The NDC shall also be instituted whenever there is notification of an appeal from the SRDC

The committee shall be comprised of three (3) to five (5) persons composed of; a representative of the Regional Heads, Technical Thematic Working Group member, a representative of Secretariat Senior Management Team (as secretary), and two (2) board members (Board Chair not included).

Any three members available from the above shall constitute a quorum for business to proceed

13.3. Sub-Regional Disciplinary Committee (SRDC)

A SRDC shall be instituted whenever there is a disciplinary hearing following a breach of the code of conduct by a member at the district or subregional level.

The SRDC shall be instituted for purposes of investigation and recommendation on sanctions or referral of cases to NDC in instances of gross misconduct that are likely to impact the organization.

The SRDC shall be comprised of three (3) to five (5) persons composed of the subregional team head, a Technical Thematic Working Group member, a member from the relevant district, and any two (2) members from the relevant sub-region.

Any two members available plus either the head of subregion or technical thematic member (as chair) shall constitute a quorum for business to proceed. The secretary will be selected from the two members available.

14. ROLL OUT, DISSEMINATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The implementation and rollout of the code of conduct of the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) is a collective responsibility that involves all members and structures of the Coalition in adhering to and upholding its core values. Below are some of the roles of NCHRD-U structures and members in the implementation and rollout of the code of conduct.

14.1. Role of the Board

14.1.1. Approval of the code of conduct

The board has the responsibility of approving the code of conduct, including any modifications, before it is rolled out. This ensures that the code aligns with the organization's values and goals.

14.1.2. Oversight

The board is also responsible for ensuring that the organization adheres to the code of conduct. They provide oversight to ensure that the code's implementation is in line with the organization's values.

14.2. Role of the Secretariat

14.2.1. Development of the code of conduct

The secretariat plays a pivotal role in facilitating the development of the code of conduct. They are responsible for identifying the key values and principles the organization stands for and for incorporating them into the code.

14.2.2. Implementation of the code of conduct

The secretariat is responsible for ensuring that the code of conduct is implemented across the organization, including providing a copy of the code to every staff or member to sign off before admission into the organization.

They develop policies and procedures that align with the code and provide training to staff and members on the code's principles.

14.2.3. Monitoring compliance

The secretariat is responsible for monitoring compliance with the code of conduct. They track performance against the code's principles and report to the board **on** any areas of non-compliance.

14.2.4. Management of complaints

The secretariat also manages complaints related to the code of conduct. They initiate investigations of any allegations of non-compliance, take necessary actions to address any violations, and report their findings to the board.

14.2.5. Communication

The secretariat plays a vital role in communicating the code of conduct to staff and members. They ensure that the code is accessible, understandable, and that stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities.

14.2.6. Updating the code of conduct

Over time, the code of conduct can become outdated or irrelevant. It is the secretariat's responsibility to coordinate updating of the code, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective.

14.3. Role of Regional Structures

The role of Technical Thematic Working Group (TTWG), Regional Heads and Subregional Coalitions shall include;

14.3.1. Induction and training

Support the induction and training of new members on the code of conduct in collaboration with the Secretariat.

14.3.2. Implementation

They work collaboratively to ensure that the code of conduct is disseminated and implemented consistently across all regions.

14.3.3. Review and analysis

Support identification of potential risks and opportunities for improvement in the implementation process and provide recommendations on how to address them.

14.3.4. Building organizational culture

Ensure that the code of conduct is integrated into the broader organizational culture, values, and procedures.

14.4. Role Members

14.4.1. Compliance

All staff and members of NCHRD-U are expected to comply with the provisions of the code of conduct. This means that each member must understand, acknowledge in writing to, and adhere to the rules and guidelines stated in the code, and ensure that their actions are in line with the values and principles of the Coalition.

14.4.2. Awareness creation

Staff and members of NCHRD-U have a role in creating awareness and disseminating information about the code of conduct. This involves sharing the code with their respective organizations and networks, explaining its importance, and encouraging compliance with its provisions.

14.4.3. Reporting violations:

NCHRD-U members are expected to report any violations of the code of conduct that they witness or are aware of. This includes reporting any cases of discrimination, harassment, abuse, or violence. Reporting of the violations will help to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to address the situation.

14.4.4. Commitment to collective action

Staff and NCHRD-U members have a role to play in ensuring that the Coalition remains cohesive, inclusive, and focused on the common goal of promoting and protecting human rights in Uganda. Members are encouraged to support Collective Action and ensure their actions align with the shared core values of the Coalition.

14.4.5. Review and feedback

Staff and members of NCHRD-U can provide feedback and suggestions on the effectiveness of the code of conduct. This feedback can be used to review and improve the code of conduct as necessary to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

15. MODIFICATIONS AND UPDATES

The NCHRD-U Code of Conduct is a living document that may be modified or updated to ensure its relevance and effectiveness over time.

15.1. Reviews and feedback

When considering modifications or updates to the Code of Conduct, feedback, suggestions, and concerns from stakeholders shall be sought.

A review of the code of conduct will be conducted annually, and feedback for areas of review will be solicited from staff and members.

A long-term review of the Code of Conduct can also be done alongside the strategic plan review and update to ensure continued relevance to the organization's ideals and aspirations.

15.2. Proposed Changes

Proposed changes to the Code of Conduct will be carefully evaluated by the secretariat based on their potential impact and alignment with the NCHRD-U mission.

15.3. Final Approval

Once proposed changes have been reviewed by the secretariat, recommended to and approved by the board, they will be communicated transparently to all Staff and members.

APPENDIXES

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT²

I, [Full Name], hereby acknowledge and agree to abide by the NCHRD-U Code of Conduct. I understand that as a staff/member, I am expected to uphold the values, principles, and behaviours outlined in the Code of Conduct.

I understand that the Code of Conduct applies to all interactions, events, activities, and spaces associated with NCHRD-U, both online and offline.

I acknowledge that violations of the Code of Conduct may result in consequences, including counselling, verbal warning, and written warning, final Warning, suspension, termination or dismissal as outlined in the Code of Conduct document.

By acknowledging and agreeing to this Code of Conduct, I affirm my commitment to the values and standards of NCHRD-U and my dedication to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for everyone.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

² Every secretariat staff or member must sign this document as part of the admission process to the NCHRD-U.

MATRIX OF CODE OF CONDUCT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Summary Matrix of Code of Conduct Roles and Responsibilities of NCHRD-U Structures																			
Structures	AB	AC	ACC	AS	BOC	CCA	COM	COP	DCC	DSP	ICC	MC	MCP	MP	OST	RAF	R&I	RPV	UCC
Board		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Secretariat	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional structures	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Members	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓					✓	✓	✓	

KEY:


AB	Awareness building
AC	Awareness creation
ACC	Approval of the Code of Conduct and updates
AS	Approving sanctions
BOC	Building organizational culture
CCA	Commitment to collective action
COM	Communication
COP	Compliance
DCC	Development of the code of conduct
DSP	Disciplinary Procedures
ICC	Implementation of code of conduct
MC	Monitoring compliance
MCP	Management of complaints
MP	Monitoring progress
OST	Oversight
RAF	Review, analysis and feedback
R&I	Roll out and implementation
RPV	Reporting violations
UCC	Updating the code of conduct

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